Bible Characters – Solomon
(1 Kings 1 to 11; 1 Chronicles 28-29; 2 Chronicles 1 to 9)

When you hear the name Solomon, what comes to mind? Likely, you may have heard about his wisdom (which we can read about in several of his writings in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon), or his fame and splendor, completing the elaborate temple, as was promised to is father David. However, we should also consider looking at Solomon's life a bit closer, since it reveals a good amount of struggle, family challenges and especially the later disobedience, as seen in his relationship with God.

Reading about Solomon in the book of Kings (1 Kings 1-11), we see that it all starts well, as he takes over the reign from his father, David. He humbly asks for wisdom from God, to be able to rule his people well (1 Kings 3:5-14). Thereafter he sets us his rulership (1 Kings 4), having demonstrated his God-given ability to rule his people wisely (1 Kings 3:16-20). He and his people prosper, he builds the temple (1 Kings 6), his palace (1 Kings 7) and brings the Ark of the Covenant to the temple where we see his dedication to the Lord, foremost in his prayer (1 Kings 8) with the Lord God responding to him (1 Kings 9) - promising him blessings for obedience, but also warns him of the consequences for disobedience.

The turning point in Solomon's life, occurs when he accumulates horses from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28) which directly violates the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). However, it is Solomon's choice of many pagan wives that violate God's conditional promise (1 Kings 9:4-7) and turns the kings heart away from God. This makes the Lord very angry: "The LORD was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the LORD's command." (1 Kings 11:9-10 NLT). We are left to see the outcome of his disobedience in the last phase of his life (facing adversaries) (1 Kings 11), eventually leading to the splitting apart of the Israelite people into a northern and a southern kingdom (1 Kings 12).

In sum, we may be tempted to judge Solomon, however, let us not do that, since the Bible tells us not to (Matthew 7:1-2). Instead, let us focus on what we can learn from this person, and one of the things is that we are called to obey God, regardless of the cost. Solomon himself reminds us of this in one of his writings later in life: "That's the whole story. Here now is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad." (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NLT). Here, despite Solomon's shortcomings, we see a glimpse of hope - even in this famous kings heart -which prepares us to reflect and turn to the One, who was able to keep all of God's commands perfectly, that is our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17-18). Thus, the 'wisest' thing we can do is to turn to Christ in all areas of our lives – with a repentant, humble, surrendered and obedient heart, asking and trusting Him to help us persevere, through the Person and power of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-18; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

For further study:

Gardner P. *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters: The Complete Who's Who in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001.

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